



RHODE ISLAND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT CORPORATION

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M E M O R A N D U M

TO: JAMES M. BROWN
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FROM: Dante G. Ionata *Dante*
R.I. Solid Waste Management Corporation

RE: Cancer Risk Newsletter, first revision

DATE: October 12, 1995

BY FAX

Attached for your review is a copy of the newsletter article I faxed to you yesterday with the revisions recommended by Dennis which I discussed with you and with the emendation requested by you incorporated.

Also attached are copies of the Chairman's Open Letter to the People of Johnston and the article quoting Bela Matyas.

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EPA HUMAN HEALTH RISK ASSESSMENT

EPA FINDS NO CURRENT HEALTH RISK FROM CENTRAL LANDFILL

A study completed by the Environmental Protection Agency last year to determine if Central Landfill poses a risk to public health indicates there is no evidence that anyone's health is endangered as a result of living near the Landfill.

The study, called a Human Health Risk Assessment, was based on seven years' worth of environmental and public health impact data pertaining to Central Landfill and cost approximately \$200,000. The environmental and health studies on which this Health Risk Assessment was based cost a total of nearly \$4 million to conduct.

The Health Risk Assessment was one of the many studies performed to identify the impacts caused by the Central Landfill Superfund Site and the programs that would be needed to address those impacts.

CENTRAL LANDFILL PROGRAMS PROTECT HUMAN HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT

According to John P. DeVillars, EPA Regional Administrator in Boston, the Superfund programs that EPA has approved at Central Landfill are "protective of human health and the environment" and comply with all federal and state laws and regulations.

The Human Health Risk Assessment followed a four-step process:

1. Those hazardous substances at the Landfill that could cause human health problems were identified;
2. The means by which people could be exposed to these substances and the extent and nature of exposure were analysed;
3. The types and nature of adverse health effects that would be caused by exposure to these substances were analysed;
4. The potential and actual health risks caused by the Landfill were summarized.

The study analysed the health risks resulting from the public's exposure to soils, groundwater, surface water and sediments and air from Central Landfill and concluded that:

NO DANGER FROM SOIL, AIR, SURFACE WATER OR SEDIMENTS

- There is no evidence of health risks from air-borne contamination because air quality on the Landfill site meets OSHA standards and, in any event, air pollution is no higher downwind of the Landfill than upwind;

- There is no significant risk to the public through exposure to Landfill soils because the general public does not have access to the facility;

- With respect to surface water and sediments from the Landfill, the Upper Simmons and Almy Reservoirs are "classified by the Department of Environmental Management for primary and secondary recreation such as swimming, fishing and boating . . . "

NO CURRENT RISK FROM INGESTING CONTAMINATED GROUNDWATER

- "There is no current risk associated with the ingestion of contaminated ground water" because "all residences and businesses surrounding the (Landfill) have been offered public water and almost all have accepted."

GROUNDWATER CONTAMINATION PROBLEMS CAN BE PREVENTED

The study identifies the single potential health risk associated with the Landfill as "the possible exposure to and ingestion of contaminated groundwater." While there is no existing health problem caused by polluted groundwater under current conditions, the study reported that contaminated groundwater can be prevented from becoming a future problem by adopting programs to minimize and treat contamination, and rigidly controlling groundwater flow.

According to the EPA's official decision concerning the Central Landfill Superfund site, the program to be implemented by the Corporation with EPA approval "is protective of human health and the environment" and "will permanently reduce the risks posed to human health and the environment by controlling exposures to human and (the environment) through treatment, engineering controls and institutional controls."

THERE IS NO HEALTH HAZARD FROM LIVING NEAR THE LANDFILL

The results of the EPA study were summarized by James M. Brown, EPA's Superfund Remedial Project Manager, who said, "As long as people do not drink the groundwater from the site, there is no reason to be concerned about health hazards from living near the Central Landfill."

HEALTH STUDIES TO CONTINUE

Mr. Brown also reported that EPA has initiated a second phase of the Human Health Risk Assessment, currently underway, which will

study the affects on human health of swimming in Upper Simmons Reservoir, eating fish caught in Upper Simmons, ingesting the reservoir's water and touching its sediments. This will be a two-year study and will cost approximately \$250,000.

Two studies of fish from Upper Simmons have already been completed under DEM supervision; these studies indicate that levels of contamination in fish from Upper Simmons are lower than the average level of contamination found in fresh water fish from around the State.

STRICT MONITORING WILL BE MAINTAINED

In the meantime, the Corporation will continue to carefully monitor potential contamination from Central Landfill under strict supervision by DEM: Four different air pollution monitoring devices will continue to be maintained and sampled quarterly. Groundwater will be monitored by taking samples every three months from 45 different monitoring wells that surround the Landfill. Moreover, surface water is sampled and tested on a quarterly basis from five different designated points around the Landfill.

as reviewed by: tew, dennis

OPEN LETTER TO THE PEOPLE OF JOHNSTON

The Solid Waste Management Corporation is mailing this special message to every home in Johnston because a recent front page article in the Journal-Bulletin discussed cancer and Central Landfill side by side. The article was careful not to say the Landfill has caused cancer or any other health problems. However, because the Landfill and cancer were discussed together in the same newspaper article, many people were left with the impression of a direct link between the two.

We want to make sure all the people of Johnston know what the facts are concerning Central Landfill and public health so they won't worry needlessly.

On behalf of the Solid Waste Management Corporation, I want to assure the people of Johnston there is absolutely no reason to fear that Central Landfill is endangering anyone's health.

After nearly a decade of environmental and health studies costing millions of dollars, no one --not DEM, the Health Department or any other independent party -- has ever found even a single case in which the Landfill caused an adverse health effect.

Central Landfill and its operation have been subjected continuously to the most intense and thoroughgoing scrutiny possible for nearly 10 years by scores of impartial, outside experts -- physicians and other scientists responsible for public health and environmental protection -- and no danger to public health has ever been determined.

Our facilities, their design and construction and daily operations are very stringently regulated by DEM according to standards substantially more rigorous than federal standards. Our environmental programs and measures are state-of-the-art.

If an imminent threat to public health were ever attributed to the Central Landfill, I would close the facility down immediately.

After you have reviewed the facts and what the experts have to say, we think you will agree with us that the Central Landfill does not constitute a cancer risk or other health problem for anyone.

Dominic L. Ragosta, Chairman

DR. BELA MATYAS

The State Department of Health has never done a cancer risk study in the neighborhoods surrounding Central Landfill despite the recurring belief expressed publicly by Johnston residents that the cancer rate in their town is higher than in the rest of the state.

Dr. Bela Matyas, Medical Director for the Division of Disease Control in the Rhode Island Department of Health, said "the reason we have not done a cancer risk study there is because we don't have a cancer risk problem in Johnston, we have a risk communication problem and they are entirely different things." Dr. Matyas explained that because people believe the cancer rate is higher than normal does not make it so.

"People ignore the facts about the Landfill," Dr. Matyas said. "The facts are that we have to have a landfill and you people (the SWMC) run the Landfill properly. In fact, you have gone way beyond the call of duty with respect to running the facility in a manner that is safe in terms of public health and sound environmentally."